

The life of an American student

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After five months of teaching in Japan, I have realized there are many differences between the daily life of students in Japan and the US. One major difference is that many students walk or bike to school in Japan, whereas in America most children take the school bus and some are driven to school by their parents. In the past, it was common for students to walk some distance during their commute but now parents think it is too dangerous to let children walk by themselves. During my time as a student, I rode the school bus until my last two years of high school when my sister and I drove to school in our car.

One big difference between American students and Japanese is the politeness and strictness of Japanese students. In Japan, students have to do 'aisatsu' before every class and are expected to greet everyone in the halls. In the US there are no greetings before class and students don't often greet people who aren't their friends. I was surprised at all the rules the students must follow, especially when entering the teachers' room. They have to introduce themselves and clearly state their reason before fully entering the room, and they even have to take off their hats and bags before entering. American schools don't have many rules and teachers aren't strict about how students sit, eat, or talk. We also don't have a teachers's room instead, each teacher has their own classroom and students don't have to say anything to enter the classroom.

American elementary classes are also a little different, we don't have Sogo, moral education, or home economics. I think home economics classes would be helpful in the US, but it would be too expensive for schools. I was surprised to learn that each student has their own art supplies, sewing kits, and textbooks because many American students are not be able to afford all those materials. American schools usually supply materials for students.

When it comes to lunch, American students can either buy their lunch or bring their own and we all eat together in the cafeteria for about an hour. We also have people who prepare the lunches for us unlike in Japan where the students prepare lunch. School lunches in Japan are also much healthier than what I ate as a student.

Lastly, the emergency drills that Japanese students prepare for are different than in the US. All American schools have fire drills and "active shooter" drills which we prepare by locking all the doors, turning off the lights, and quietly hiding behind desks or in closets. I did these drills at least twice a year since kindergarten and so I grew up thinking these drills were normal but I now realize that most countries do not need this type of drill because they are much safer.